

Yesterday marked the passing of the [State Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act](#), also known as SCHIP. Over the last two years, it has become necessary to fund the Children's Health Insurance Program in some states through supplemental appropriations as program wait-lists grew and children waited for care. Now, with the country in the midst of the severest financial crisis in decades, parents are more concerned than ever about the health and well-being of their children. SCHIP represents an investment in our nation's safety net; by preserving and expanding the program to provide coverage for 11 million children over the next four and a half years, the bill alleviates some of the stress placed on men and women faced with unemployment.

Santa Clara was the first county in the nation to ensure that every child with parents at or below 300% of the federal poverty level had real access to regular health care as a result of being insured. The county's Children's Health Initiative raises its own money to add to state and federal funding in order to keep all the children of my district healthy - last year, the program enrolled over 144,000 children and serves as a model for 17 other California counties.

This innovation is threatened by the county's \$220 million projected budget deficit for Fiscal Year 2009, and we in Santa Clara County face the possibility of deep cuts in our healthcare system totaling nearly \$100 million. The budget woes of the state of California limit the assistance it can provide, and so without this reauthorization of SCHIP, the financial burden on the county would be significantly heavier. I was proud to vote for the reauthorization of SCHIP, which would provide our program, and our county's children, with much needed stability for the next four and a half years.

As the Chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), it is particularly gratifying to see the inclusion of a provision in this bill that will allow states to waive the five-year waiting period for Medicaid and SCHIP imposed on pregnant women and children who are legally present in the United States. It is morally unconscionable that pregnant women and innocent children have been made victims of a raucous and frequently misleading immigration debate. Hundreds of thousands of people from Asian countries immigrated legally to the United States in 2007 and 2008; at the very least the children in those families deserve to have health insurance and access to care. CAPAC has consistently joined with the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Hispanic Caucus in advocating for protection of this vulnerable population and I thank Speaker Pelosi and our other House leadership for redressing this injustice.

The passage of this bill protects the health of millions of American children. It is the first step in a long journey toward repairing our healthcare system and providing universal coverage, care, and access to the people of our nation, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to complete that journey.